

SPECIAL AGENT

The men and women of the Diplomatic Security Service are specially trained Foreign Service security professionals; they are also sworn Federal law enforcement officers. Overseas, they advise ambassadors on all security matters and manage a complex range of security programs designed to protect personnel, facilities, and information. In the United States, special agents protect the Secretary of State and visiting foreign dignitaries, investigate passport and visa fraud, and conduct personnel security investigations.



QUALIFICATIONS: AS DEMANDING AS THE JOB

A career as a special agent in the Diplomatic Security Service is not for everyone. Requirements are tough and competition is intense for these demanding jobs. Special agents must be available for assignment anywhere in the world at any time. They must qualify in the use of firearms during training and throughout their career; they must be willing to carry and, if necessary, use firearms in the course of their official duties.

Applicants must be U.S. citizens between 21 and 36 years of age, willing to travel and to live and serve anywhere overseas or in the United States and have a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university. Male applicants born after 1959 must be registered under the Selective Service Act. Applicants must possess a valid U.S. driver's license and be able to successfully complete 5 months of initial training which includes meeting certain physical fitness standards as well as passing firearms, academic, and specialized driving courses.



Those who meet the basic qualifications for a special agent position are invited to participate in an assessment process, which culminates with an oral examination before a panel of the Foreign Service's Board of Examiners. Those who succeed in passing that oral assessment are placed on a rank-ordered list of eligible-to-hire candidates for up to 24 months. Special agent candidates are selected from that list.

Once the Department of State has authorization to hire a specific number of special agents, it begins contacting those on the eligible-to-hire list to extend a conditional offer of employment for a specific class opening. Candidates who accept conditional job offers must undergo an in-depth personal background investigation to attain a top secret/special compartmented information security (TS/SCI)* clearance. Candidates must also pass an extensive physical examination and be found suitable for Foreign Service employment.

Only those candidates who pass the medical, background, and suitability clearances are offered probationary appointments as Foreign Service special agent career candidates. Upon successful completion of a 4-year probationary period as special agents, employees are offered special agent career appointments.

TRAINING: COMPREHENSIVE AND SPECIALIZED

A substantial training investment is made in each candidate selected to be a special agent. A special agent candidate's initial 5 months of training normally begins with an orientation period in Washington, DC, followed by basic and specialized

**SCI access requires agent candidates and all immediate family members or cohabitants be American citizens.*

training at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Glynco, Georgia.

Additional specialized training continues at Department of State facilities in the Washington, DC, area.

Special agent candidates are trained in personal protection techniques, criminal law and investigations, firearms, specialized driving, first aid, and background investigations. Prior to being assigned overseas, special agents are trained in security management, post operations, counterintelligence, electronic security subjects, and languages for certain

designated posts. Other instruction includes advanced firearms techniques, explosive devices detection, arson investigation, and medical assistance.

DOMESTIC ASSIGNMENT: BEGIN WITH THE BASICS

Diplomatic Security Service special agents are armed and have arrest authority. Often an agent's first assignment is to one of eight field offices in the United States where they receive experience in a variety of security and law enforcement duties. Domestically, special agents spend a great deal of time working and traveling on protective security assignments for the Secretary of State or visiting foreign dignitaries. They also work on

passport and visa fraud, counterintelligence, background, or other investigations. Temporary assignments overseas to assist with protection requirements or to assist an overseas post with a specific task also may be among a domestic special agent's duties. Throughout their careers, special agents can expect to work overtime, occasional irregular schedules that require duty on weekends and holidays and, as is customary under Law Enforcement Availability Pay legislation, to work an average of 10 hours per day.

While it is often the case that special agents may initially serve in domestic assignments, it is equally possible that the needs of the Service may require assignment overseas earlier than expected or on a few months' notice.



OVERSEAS ASSIGNMENT: ON TO GREATER RESPONSIBILITY

Assignments overseas offer great opportunity for career growth. At U.S. embassies and consulates abroad, special agents develop, implement, and manage various aspects of a comprehensive security program designed to protect personnel, property, and information against terrorists, foreign intelligence agents, and criminals. On their first overseas tour, Diplomatic Security officers are normally assigned to assist an experienced special agent at a particular post. Overseas, a special agent is often referred to as a Diplomatic Security officer or as the embassy's regional security officer. Special agents are required to serve a substantial portion of their career living and working overseas. With proven aptitudes and on-the-job performance, a Diplomatic Security officer may advance to the position of regional security officer, responsible for managing security operations for an embassy or for several diplomatic posts within an assigned region. Regional security officers work closely with top State Department officials and host country security and police officials and serve as operational supervisors of U.S. Marine Security Guard detachments assigned to protect U.S. diplomatic facilities.

With the experience of having served as an overseas security program manager, onward domestic assignments can be equally challenging and rewarding. Special agents returning from assignment overseas can aspire to managing a field office program or a Department security headquarters office responsible for a variety of special services or support operations.

A career as a Foreign Service special agent is rewarding and challenging. It involves uncommon commitments and occasional hardships, as well as unique rewards and opportunities along with the pride and satisfaction of representing the United States and protecting U.S. interests at home and abroad.

SALARY AND BENEFITS

Starting salary ranges within the steps for Foreign Service grade FP-6 depending upon qualifications and location of assignment. Current salary levels are reflected in the official vacancy announcement. Slightly higher salaries are available for candidates

who can demonstrate fluency in certain foreign languages or who have additional qualifying related work experience. During the first 3 years of a special agent's probationary appointment, satisfactory performance earns automatic grade and pay increases. Thereafter, promotions are competitive based upon performance ratings and the recommendation of the annual promotion selection panel.

An excellent benefits package includes:

- Law Enforcement Availability Pay (LEAP)
- Group life and health insurance
- Annual leave and sick leave accrual
- Retirement plan and thrift savings plan
- Overseas: government-provided quarters or housing allowance
- Home leave to the United States between overseas assignments
- Rest and recuperation leave, with transportation partially paid, for employees and their eligible family members assigned to designated overseas hardship posts
- Cost-of-living allowance where costs are substantially higher than a designated average (some U.S. cities and some overseas posts)

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designated overseas posts
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RE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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